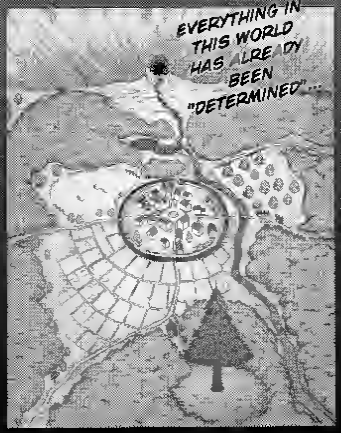


It is customary that each new generation of a family to be strewed the same sacred task: a shopkeeper's child will become a shopkeeper, a guard's will become a guard; the village chief's will succeed their parent.

Ruhd Village is located at the northernmost frontier of the Noclan-ear Th'North Empire, one of the four separate empires of the Human Empire. It stands at, in every sense of the term, the edge of the world.

Every day, everyone waking up at the decided hour, eating the same breakfast. And then heading out to their wheat fields, workshops, and weaving factories.

And so, the village has maintained this routine for several hundred years, practically unchanging.

This is how the people have lived, day in, day out.

Without even a single person thinking about changing the system.

SWORD ART ONLINE

ソードアート・オンライン

プログレッシブ・アリシゼーション

PROJECT ALICIZATION

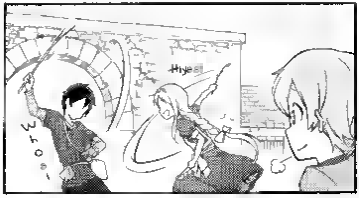
Yamada Koutarou Original Work Kawahara Reki
Character Design abec

Previously on S.A.O:

Kirito has participated in a new VR experiment. With his memories sealed away, he seems to have lived in that world's new birth, and together with his best friends Eugeo and Alice, he begins a tiny adventure.

-Rulid Village-
MAN, GIRLS ALWAYS TAKE SO LONG TO GET DRESSED!
AH SHE'S HERE.
WELL, SHE IS A GIRL. THERE'S NO HELPING THAT.
ALICE IS THE VILLAGE CHIEF'S DAUGHTER.
BESIDES,
You were late, too so...
AND IN TWO YEARS,
SHE'LL BE SAYING STUFF LIKE, "I CAN'T GO INTO THE WOODS, MY CLOTHES WILL GET DIRTY!"

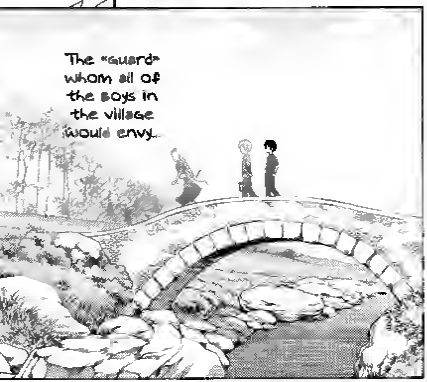
It won't just be Sacred Arts, either. She'll have training for manners and behavior, too.
And after that...
SHE'S SUPPOSED TO BECOME A ROLE MODEL FOR THE WOMEN OF THE VILLAGE, SO
SOON ENOUGH SHE WON'T EVEN BE ALLOWED TO PLAY WITH BOYS.
SFX STEP STEP
HEY, WHAT ARE YOU SPACING OUT FOR?
A- AH, IT'S NOTHING.
I guess she'll marry into some family...?
HERE
HERE
Geez
YOU TWO WERE TOO EARLY!
YOU'RE LATE!


Hyah!
3…2…1~

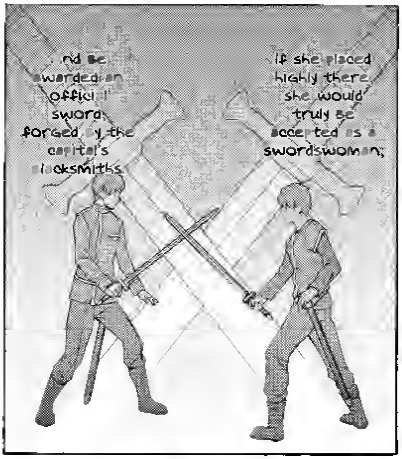
ヒュン!
THEN... THE SUMMER ICE-SEARCH MISSION
IS A GO!
A princess and two commoners.

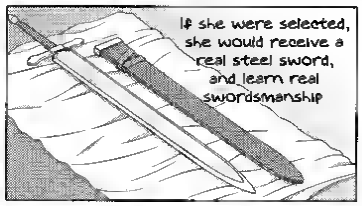
Come to think of it, Alice used to be good with a sword, too..
She carries herself beautifully.

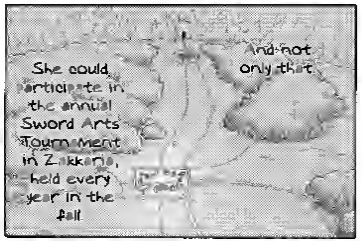
A GUARD, HUH


The "guard" whom all of the boys in the village would envy..

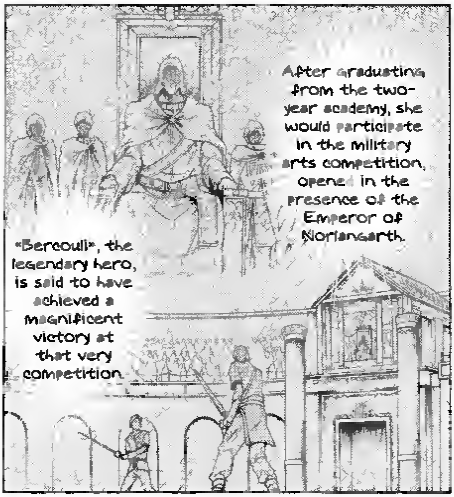
If she'd continued training, she could've become the village's first female guard

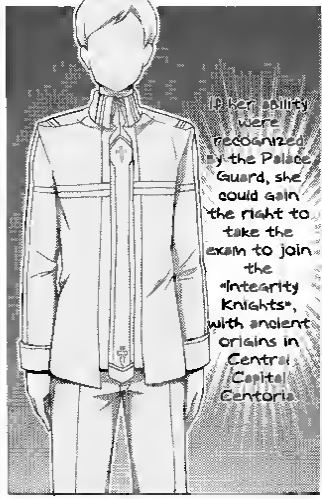

nd be awarded an offici l sword, forged y the capital's l cksmiths.
If she placed highly there, she would truly be accepted as a swordswoman.


If she were selected, she would receive a real steel sword, and learn real swordsmanship

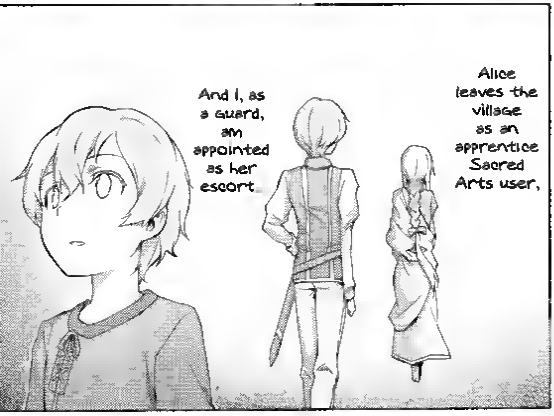

She could participate in the annual Sword Arts Tournament in Zakkano, held every year in the fall
nd not only that

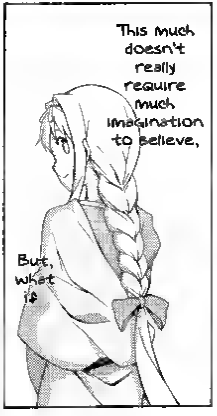
The dream doesn't end there.


After graduating from the two-year academy, she would participate in the military arts competition, opened in the presence of the Emperor of Norlangarth.
«Bercouli», the legendary hero, is said to have achieved a magnificent victory at that very competition.


If her ability were recognized by the Palace Guard, she could gain the right to take the exam to join the «Integrity Knights», with ancient origins in Central Capital Centoria.

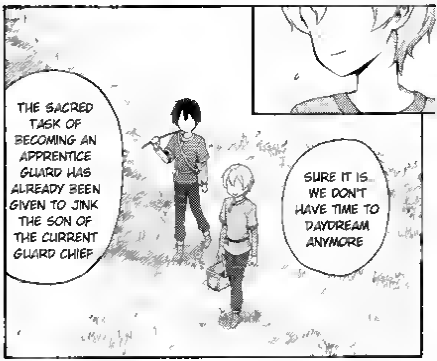
Is appointed as an "Integrity Knight", the very peak of all swordsmen, who protect the order of the world and are sent to fight the demons of the Dark Territory under divine orders.
After that, her final destination would be the "Four Empires Unity Tournament", held by the Axiom Church itself.
Only the one who wins this tournament, presided over by the gods themselves,

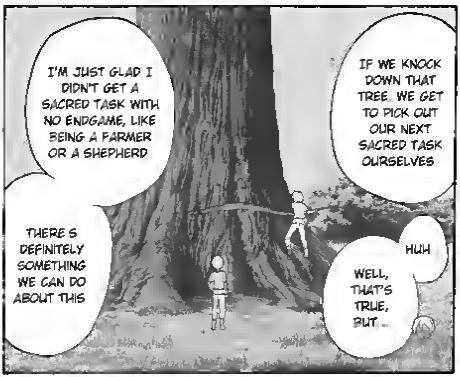

And I, as a guard, am appointed as her escort.
Alice leaves the village as an apprentice Sacred Arts user,


This much doesn't really require much imagination to believe,
But, what if

THE DREAM ISN'T OVER YET.

BESIDES NEITHER YOU NOR I ARE A MATCH FOR ALICE WITH A SWORD
A-AH...
NOT EVEN THE VILLAGE CHIEF CAN CHANGE A SACRED TASK THAT'S ALREADY BEEN GIVEN.


THE SACRED TASK OF BECOMING AN APPRENTICE GUARD HAS ALREADY BEEN GIVEN TO JINK THE SON OF THE CURRENT GUARD CHIEF
SURE IT IS. WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO DAYDREAM ANYMORE

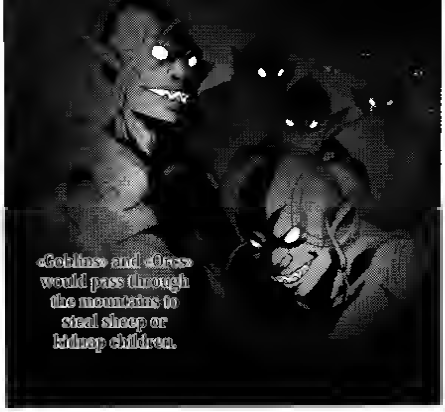

I'M JUST GLAD I DIDN'T GET A SACRED TASK WITH NO ENDGAME, LIKE BEING A FARMER OR A SHEPHERD
IF WE KNOCK DOWN THAT TREE. WE GET TO PICK OUT OUR NEXT SACRED TASK OURSELVES
THERE'S DEFINITELY SOMETHING WE CAN DO ABOUT THIS
HUH
WELL, THAT'S TRUE, BUT...

THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS TO THAT
WE JUST HAVE TO *FINISH* OUR JOB

WE CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE ZAKKARIA SWORD ARTS TOURNAMENT.
AFTER THAT...
WE'LL CHOP DOWN THAT TREE IN ANOTHER THREE... NAH, TWO YEARS.
HEY, WHAT ARE YOU TWO GOSSIPING ABOUT BACK THERE?
LOOK, IT'S THE TWIG!
WELL, I CAN'T LET YOU STEAL ALL THE GLORY, KIRITO.
HEY NOW, AREN'T YOU TOTALLY UP FOR IT TOO?
SO WE HAVE UNTIL SOLUS IS AT THE TOP OF THE SKY BEFORE WE HAVE TO TURN BACK, HUH?
WE HAVE TO GET BACK BEFORE THE EVENING BELL.
THERE'S NO HELPING THAT. SO LET'S HURRY!
THE WATER ISN'T COLD AT ALL YET.

Well, I don't think half a day's worth of walking is enough to reach the «Mountain Range at the Edge»...
BUT, YOU KNOW,
WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT, WE'VE NEVER GONE PAST THE TWIN PONDS NOT EVEN ONCE
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT...
BECAUSE CHILDREN AREN'T ALLOWED TO GO THROUGH THE «NORTHERN PASS», ACCORDING TO VILLAGE RULES
~Loo la la loo la la~
~The lonely shepherd~
HEY, HEY,
OH, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT,
THEY SAY DEMONS FROM THE DARK TERRITORY SOMETIMES SHOWED UP AROUND HERE BACK WHEN THE VILLAGE WAS JUST BUILT.
WE'RE PRETTY FAR AWAY FROM THE VILLAGE NOW,
DO YOU THINK THERE ARE DANGEROUS ANIMALS OR SOMETHING AROUND HERE?
The «Dark Territory».
The land of darkness that surrounds the world from the other side of the «Mountain Range at the Edge».
A land unreachable by even the supreme authority of the Lahoo Index and the Axiom Church
THE DARK TERRITORY, HUH...

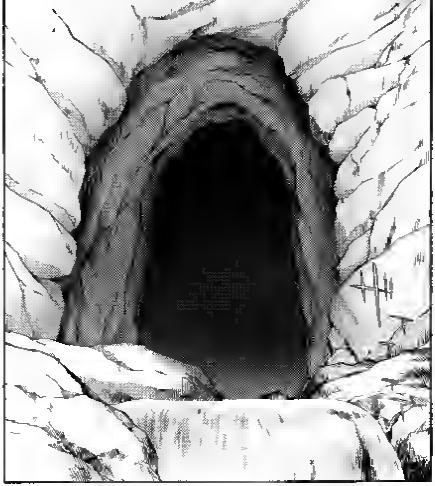
COME ON, I KNOW YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO SCARE ME.
AFTER THAT, INTEGRITY KNIGHTS CAME FROM THE CAPITAL AND KILLED THEIR LEADER, DIDN'T THEY?


«Goblins» and «Orcs» would pass through the mountains to steal sheep or kidnap children.

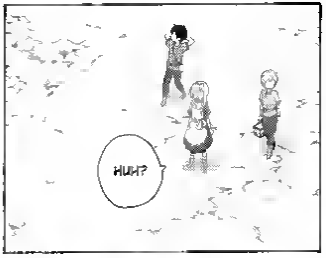
YOU'LL SEE WHEN WE GET THERE.
Let's go!

— "SINCE THAT DAY, IT HAS BECOME A COMMON SIGHT TO SEE DRAGONS CARRYING KNIGHTS IN SILVER, FLYING OVER THE MOUNTAIN RANGE AT THE EDGE."

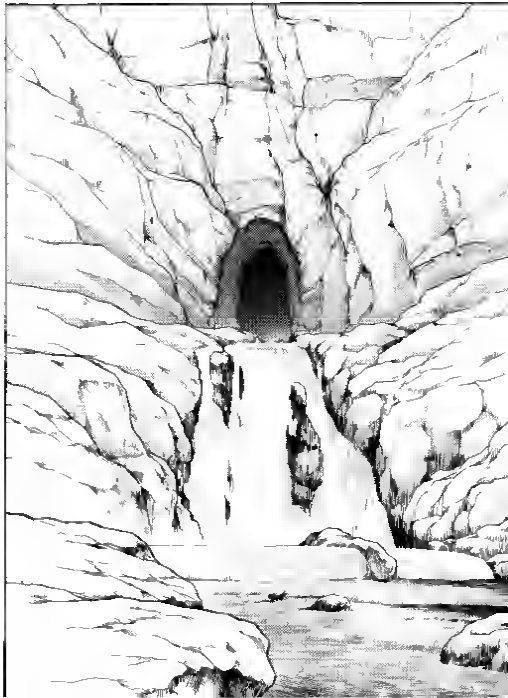
JUST A FAIRY TALE, ALL RIGHT...
Fufu
Aha
Haha



A few hours later...

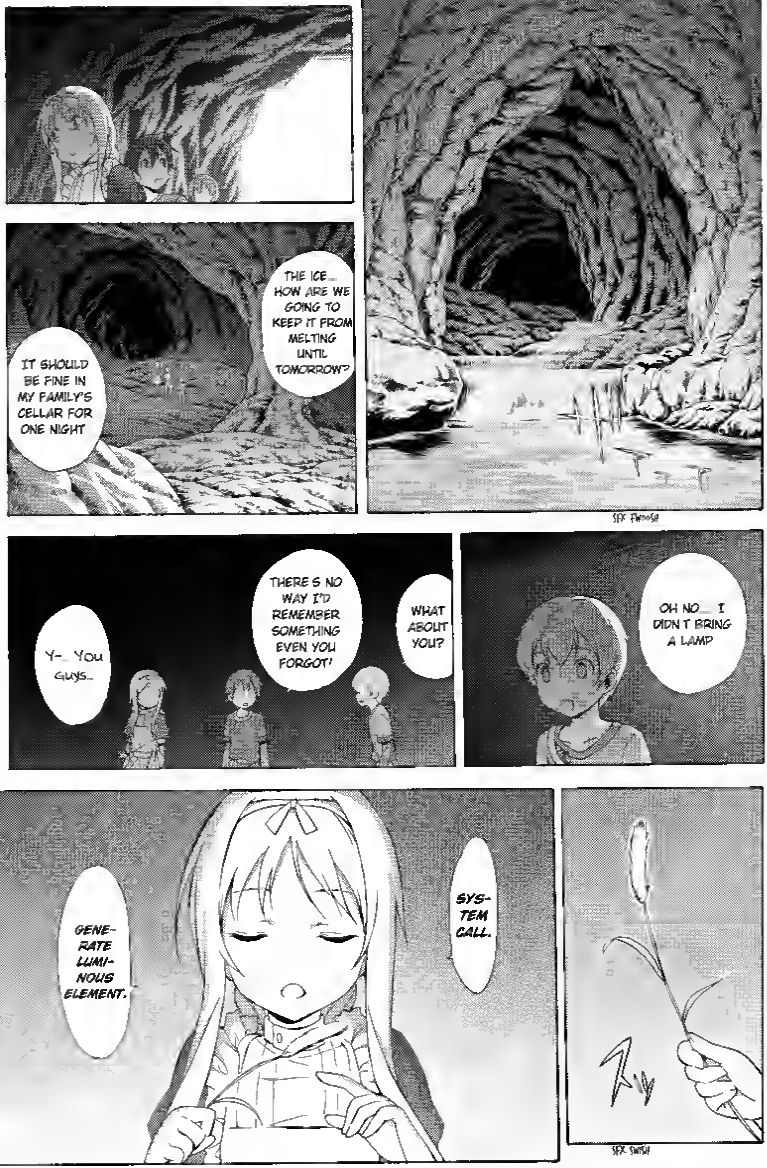

HUH?

A CAVE...

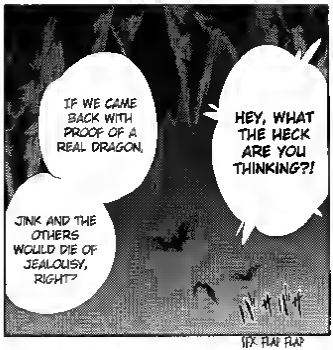


BUT WE'VE BARELY WALKED FOUR HOURS, DIDN'T WE?
Isn't that way too soon?
HUH, HUH...!?
THEN WHERE'S THE «NORTHERN PASS»? DID WE PASS IT WITHOUT EVEN NOTICING?
HUH? WE'RE HERE?
WE'VE REACHED IT ALREADY
IT'S A CAVE.
RULID REALLY IS AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD...
I feel so small.
IF THIS IS THE MOUNTAIN RANGE AT THE EDGE, THEN...
THE DARK TERRITORY IS ON THE OTHER SIDE?
SFX: STEP STEP
Hey,
THE RIVER WATER IS SUPER COLD! LIKE WELL WATER IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER!
ALICE!
EEK!
SPLASH

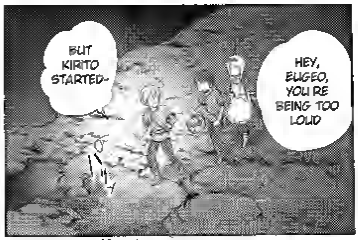
WHOA, YOU'RE RIGHT!
AH!
I DIDN'T
IT'S NOT
HUH?
STOP IT...
AH—
WHOA THERE, SLOW DOWN, YOU TWO!
WELL, WE'VE COME THIS FAR ALREADY, SO WE MIGHT AS WELL HAVE A LOOK INSIDE
BUT LET'S HAVE LUNCH FIRST
ドドドド
FIX WOOHOO!


IT SHOULD BE FINE IN MY FAMILY'S CELLAR FOR ONE NIGHT
THE ICE... HOW ARE WE GOING TO KEEP IT FROM MELTING UNTIL TOMORROW?
SFX: Fwoosh
Y-... YOU GUYS...
THERE'S NO WAY I'D REMEMBER SOMETHING EVEN YOU FORGOT!
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
OH NO... I DIDN'T BRING A LAMP
GENE-RATE LUMI-NOUS ELEMENT.
SYS-TEM CALL.
SFX: Swish

A-ALICE ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN USE ARTS FOR STUFF LIKE THIS?
You could get punished or something...
IF YOU COULD GET PUNISHED FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS I'D HAVE BEEN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING A DOZEN TIMES BY NOW
What does that mean...
WOAH!
WOW...
SFX PAAA
Y-YOU'RE PUTTING ME IN FRONT?!
WHAT, YOU AREN'T PLANNING TO PUT A FRAIL LITTLE GIRL UP FRONT, ARE YOU?
HERE
SFX Fwoosh
WHOA, NO WONDER I THOUGHT IT WAS COLD! IT'S PRACTICALLY WINTER IN HERE
LOOK, YOU CAN SEE YOUR BREATH.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE TO LOOK FOR ICE!
WHO WAS THE ONE WHO SAID THERE WOULD BE ICICLES RIGHT AT THE ENTRANCE?


HEY, WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU THINKING?!
IF WE CAME BACK WITH PROOF OF A REAL DRAGON,
JINK AND THE OTHERS WOULD DIE OF JEALOUSY, RIGHT?

SFX: FLAP FLAP

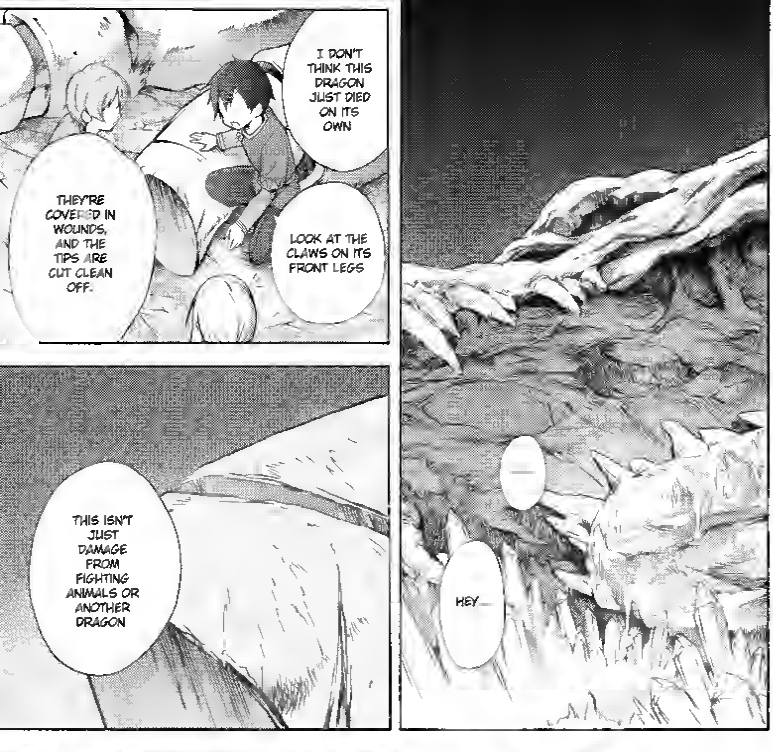


SFX: GRAB

WOAH, LOOK AT THIS!
WHOA, WE DID IT!
WE FOUND IT! WE FOUND ICE!
LET'S GO, THERE SHOULD BE MORE UP AHEAD!
IT'S AMAZING
LOOK! THIS... ALL OF THIS IS ICE!
IT'S ICE!

I NEVER THOUGHT THE RUHR WOULD BE FLOWING FROM A GIANT FROZEN LAKE.....
WITH THIS MUCH ICE, YOU COULD SEND THE ENTIRE VILLAGE INTO MIDWINTER!
HEY, LET'S TAKE A LOOK FURTHER INSIDE!
WILL WE REALLY GET TO SEE IT...?
WHAT IF... WHAT IF THERE REALLY IS A REAL DRAGON HERE?!
SFX: HEART BEATING, EXITEMENT
IT REALLY EXISTS...
IT IT REALLY
IF THAT HAPPENS, WOULD OUR STORY ALSO BE PASSED DOWN FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, THIS TIME AROUND?
IN THAT CASE, EVEN THE VILLAGE CHIEF WOULD HAVE TO
RECONSIDER OUR SACRED TASKS!
MPH-
HEY, DON'T STOP ALL OF A...
WHAT IS THIS...
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?!

SFX FWOOSH
IT... DIED?
.....
THE WHITE DRAGON'S
BONES...?


I DON'T THINK THIS DRAGON JUST DIED ON ITS OWN
THEY'RE COVERED IN WOUNDS, AND THE TIPS ARE CUT CLEAN OFF.
LOOK AT THE CLAWS ON ITS FRONT LEGS
THIS ISN'T JUST DAMAGE FROM FIGHTING ANIMALS OR ANOTHER DRAGON
—
HEY—

BU- BUT, YOU KNOW
THE «WHITE DRAGON OF THE NORTH» IS SAID TO BE ONE OF THE STRONGEST BEINGS IN THE WORLD, RIGHTEOUSLY GUARDING THE HUMAN EMPIRE FROM THE FORCES OF DARKNESS...
WHAT SWORDS MAN WOULD BE CAPABLE OF SUCH A THING...
THESE ARE WOUNDS FROM A SWORD.
THIS DRAGON WAS SLAIN... BY A HUMAN.

.....
AN INTEGRITY KNIGHT...?
NO WAY... WHY WOULD AN INTEGRITY KNIGHT
KILL THE WHITE DRAGON, AS MUCH A SYMBOL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PROTECTOR OF THE HUMAN EMPIRE AS THEY THEMSELVES?
MAYBE... THE DARK TERRITORY ALSO HAS REALLY STRONG KNIGHTS. .
NO... IF THEY DID, THE FORCES OF DARKNESS WOULD'VE BROKEN THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS A LONG TIME AGO
HUH? WHAT'RE YOU DOING, KIRITO?
For the three children
Who had never in their 11 years of life doubted the order of this world,
This was not an easy notion to accept
I DON'T GET IT...

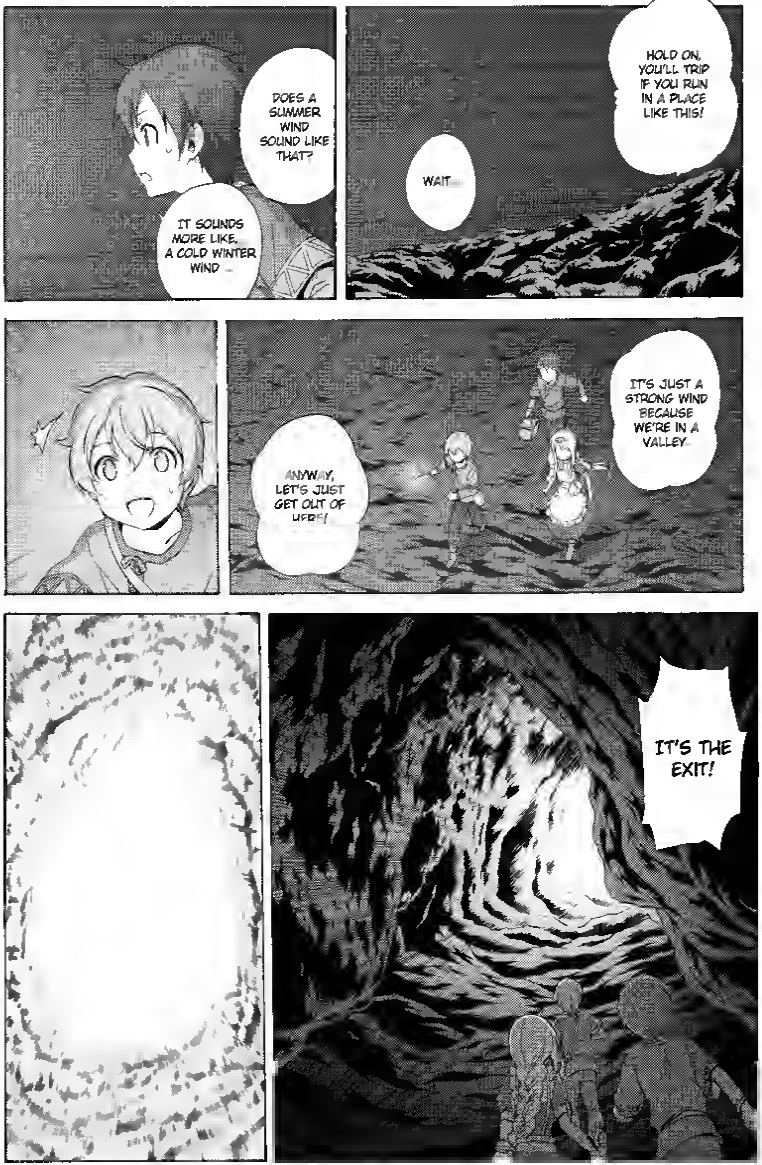
THIS IS REALLY HEAVY...
AH, THIS...!
COULD IT BE...!
IT'S SAID THAT THE HERO BERCOULI TRIED TO STEAL IT FROM UNDER THE SLEEPING WHITE DRAGON...
THE «BLUE ROSE SWORD»...!

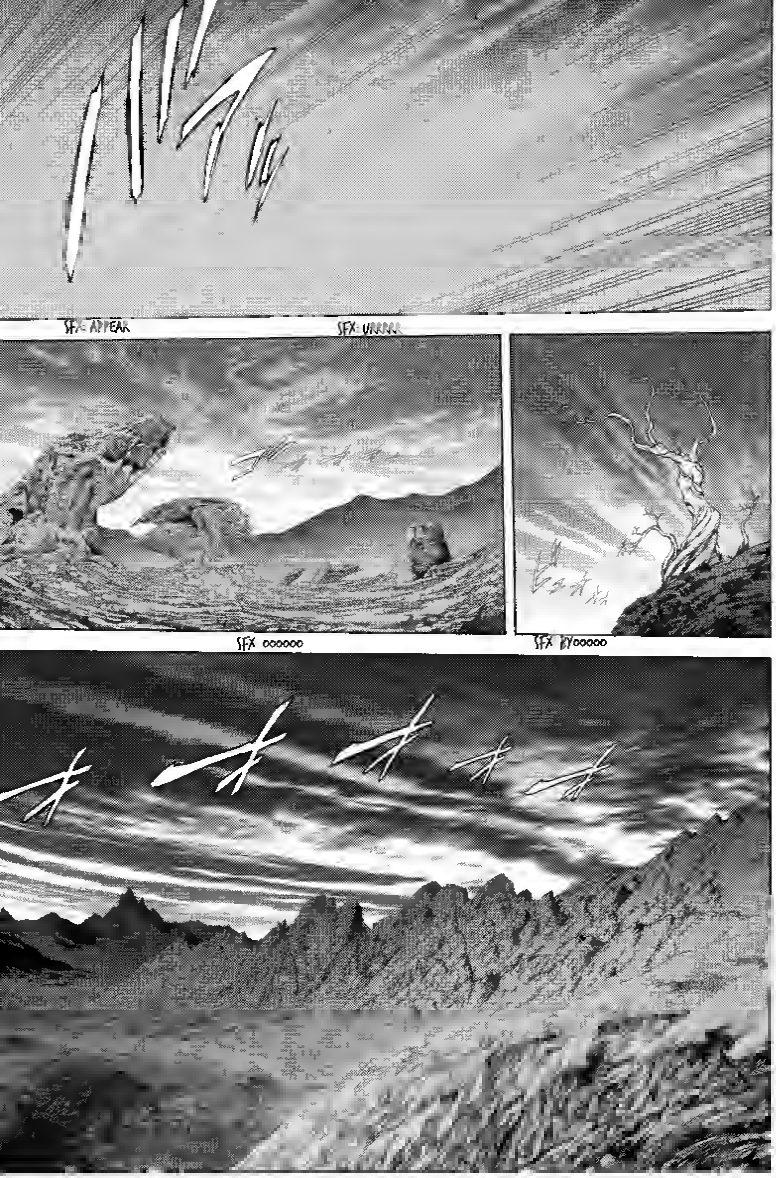
SFX: CLANG
IT'S NO USE!
IT'S TOO HEAVY...!
UGH...
IT LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A LOT OF OTHER TREASURE AROUND, TOO THOUGH...
YEAH
WHAT KIND OF QUESTION IS THAT?
THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN CARRY IT, EVEN WITH THE BOTH OF US...
SO WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT?
BUT I CAN'T SAY I FEEL LIKE TAKING IT...
IT WOULD FEEL LIKE WE'RE ROBBING A GRAVE...

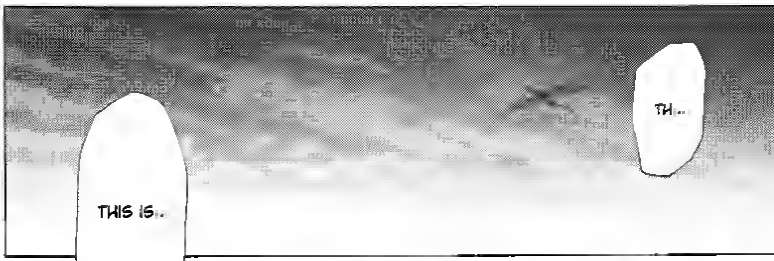
LET'S JUST TAKE THE ICE LIKE WE PLANNED
BUT JUST ICE SHOULD BE FINE
I'M SURE THE WHITE DRAGON WOULDN'T MIND
...IT'S SO PRETTY.
HUH? I HAVE TO CARRY IT ON THE WAY BACK, TOO?
MORE IMPORTANTLY WE'RE GONNA BE LATE!
OF COURSE
IT'S A SHAME THAT IT'S ONLY GOING TO MELT AFTER WE CAME ALL THIS WAY TO GET IT.
WELL, IT'S FINE IF IT MAKES OUR LUNCHES LAST LONGER, ISN'T IT?

HEY, WHICH WAY DID WE COME FROM, AGAIN?
Huh?
THERE ARE TWO ENTRANCES, THOUGH...
I—I—
HUH?
THAT WAY.
DON'T TELL ME WE'RE LOST...
ALMOST LIKE THE BERIN BROTHERS FROM THE FAIRY TALE...

KNOCK IT OFF, YOU'LL CATCH A COLD
WE COULD STILL START LEAVING YOUR CLOTHES AT FORKS IN THE ROAD, IF YOU WANT?
WE SHOULD'VE LEFT NUTS OR SOMETHING BEHIND US, TOO...
HM...
NO... MAYBE WE PASSED IT?
QUIET DOWN FOR A BIT...
HEY, WE'VE ALREADY BEEN WALKING FOR A WHILE...
HAS ANYONE SEEN THE FROZEN PUDDLE BUGBO STEPPED ON BEFORE?
WE'RE ALMOST OUTSIDE!
LOOKS LIKE THIS WAS THE RIGHT SIDE. LET'S GO!
AH, IT SOUNDS LIKE WIND?
SFX: Fwoosh


DOES A SUMMER WIND SOUND LIKE THAT?
IT SOUNDS MORE LIKE A COLD WINTER WIND...
HOLD ON, YOU'LL TRIP IF YOU RUN IN A PLACE LIKE THIS!
WAIT...
IT'S JUST A STRONG WIND BECAUSE WE'RE IN A VALLEY...
ANYWAY, LET'S JUST GET OUT OF HERE!
IT'S THE EXIT!


SFX: ARRRR
SFX: UHHH
SFX oooooo
SFX Woooooo



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